

**Chosen by God**  
**I Peter 2:1-10**

Chosen! Our mail is full of special offers that tell us we have been chosen to take advantage of a special deal. Most of us know that is not something special at all. But we do know what it feels like to be chosen for something we want. Remember the first time you were chosen to do something special. Maybe chosen to be a line leader in Kindergarten before you knew everyone got to be one eventually. Or chosen to be an officer of an organization you were part of. Or chosen for a team that you had try-outs for. Or chosen for a scholarship to college. Or chosen for a job that you really wanted. Or chosen to be a leader in the church or another organization, to lead a task force or to do a special job that excited you. Yes, we know what it feels like to be chosen and it is a something wonderful.

In our scripture today Peter was encouraging the church community - that's us friends - by explaining the power and purpose of being chosen by God. This was not a new concept in the early church but was a central understanding for the people of God throughout history. In the book of Deuteronomy we find the words:

*For you are a people holy to the Lord your God;*  
*the Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth*  
*to be his people, his treasured possession.* (Deut. 7:6).

As Peter fleshes out this concept he says there are three specific reasons why God has chosen us. First, we are chosen by God to be God's people. *Once you were not a people but now you are God's people.* Last week we heard Peter's words encouraging the community to a specific way of life defined as holy living. This section of his letter begins with instructions to get rid of all those things

that hinder holy living. To be God's people we have to clean up our acts. We need to put away all malice, all guile, all insincerity, all envy, all slander. We are called to instead drink deeply of God's pure kindness until it changes us.

I've been thinking a lot about this as we have been going through this pandemic. It is so easy when we are confined to our homes to become judgmental of others. To make judgments about what should and shouldn't be done in the midst of all the chaos. Especially when no one we know is affected and we feel frustrated with being inconvenienced. And yet I think what God is calling us to in this time of confinement is to use this time to expand our understanding of what it means to be a Christian. For it is not just knowing the facts of scripture but it is incorporating those beliefs into our lives so that we begin to see the world as God sees the world. And friends, God is mourning the loss of every life lost to this virus. God must be frustrated at the way so many are responding and the lack of empathy we see around us for those who are hurting and at risk. We are God's people and we are challenged to see the world as God sees the world and to respond in ways God would respond. And that means that we are called to compassion for all and called to be concerned about every person around us.

Secondly, as God's people we are called to be the building stones that build our foundation on the cornerstone which is Jesus Christ. We know that one stone alone does not make a solid building. But the first stone - the cornerstone - is the most important because all the other stones must be set in reference to it. The entire structure depends on the shape and form of this first stone. The cornerstone determines where the structure is located. It is also used to create a pattern making the other blocks straight or crooked. Laying the cornerstone is critical to the shape and stability of the building. The building that we are to build as God's people - the spiritual house that will be vibrant with life and faith - has Jesus Christ as the cornerstone. Our scripture says "*see I am laying in Zion a*

*stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”*

God has given us the cornerstone to start building with but something else is required. There have to be other stones to build the building - living stones that can help to shape the building. And friends, that is where we come in. We are chosen by God to be God's people and to be God's building stones - a holy priesthood offering sacrifices that are acceptable to God - our very lives focused on living as Christ calls us to.

That is the role of a priest. To be a priest is to be a person who goes between God and the people. To be the one who communicates the word of God to the world. To be commissioned with the task of carrying the caring ministry of Christ into the community. To be the one who breaks the bread of reconciliation and bears the cup of Christ's mercy to those who are hurting and in need. In other words we are not only the living stones that the building is made of but we are the mortar that seals the stones to one another and to the cornerstone. Called to go between God and the world connecting them. Called to carry the love of Christ to others so they can be drawn to Christ and strengthened. Called to be the servant people of God serving as priests to one another.

And that leads us to the third purpose. We are chosen by God to proclaim the mighty acts of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. We are chosen by God so that we can tell others of the night and day difference that our relationship with Jesus Christ has made for us and can make in their lives.

Over the last two months the church of Jesus Christ has been challenged to rethink ministry. We are being forced to move from being the church that invites people into a building to hear the good news to proclaiming the good news in new ways across the Internet. There has been a learning curve and many in church leadership are beginning to ask important questions about what we are learning through this new way of sharing the gospel message. And what all this will mean for the future of the

church of Jesus Christ post pandemic.

Let me tell you what I have come to believe. The most important task that we have as the church of Jesus Christ is to proclaim the mighty acts of God. To tell the story of faith. To teach scripture. And friends, there are many ways to continue to do that today thanks to the Internet. For the Internet is giving us a new way to share the gospel with more people. Think about those you know. Are there people who might benefit from hearing the gospel message? Could you forward the link to our service to them and then take time to talk with them about what the sermon made you think about? How Christ has impacted your life? Who knows where that conversation might lead and how God might use you in the midst of this pandemic.

That actually is just what the early church did. For the church of Jesus Christ did not begin by building buildings but by sharing the story one by one drawing people into communities that met in homes. And it was not just the story but the life change that people saw in those who believed that made the difference. It was the way the light of Christ had transformed the lives of believers that grew the church. For they offered others the same hope and grace they had found by bringing the light of Christ into their lives.

There is a story of a man hiking in the mountains out West who found a stone — a small one, about the size of a half-dollar, with smooth, rounded edges. It caught his eye for it was special. Glinting in the sunlight, it seemed to reflect all the surrounding colors, as though trying to mirror nature. He looked at it carefully admiring the colors. He placed the stone in his pocket. All the way home to the East Coast the man thought about where he should display it so its beauty could be most enjoyed. He arrived home and after checking out several spots finally placed it in a curio cabinet, next to some jade and carved ivory. The man forgot about the stone for a while. Then one day, while dusting, he was surprised to see that the stone had completely lost its luster. It sat on the shelf among

the other lovely objects, a hard, gray chunk of nothing, downright ugly. The man was shocked. He wondered - What had happened to his prize stone that had so much life? Where were the sparkle and the colors that had attracted him so much? Disgusted, he snatched it up and started for the trash can in the backyard. Then, just as he opened the kitchen door, a beam of light struck the stone. As though by magic, it began to shimmer, to glow again. In an instant the beautiful jewel tones shone brilliantly. The man wondered had the colors returned? Or had they always been there, dormant, waiting to be released? Wondering, he glanced up at the sky. What he saw was the sun shining brightly down on the stone. Sunlight? That was the answer. The rays from the sun were all his stone needed to come alive. (Source unknown.) It just needed the light to shine on it.

Friends, we are those who know the difference the light of Christ makes in our lives. We know the importance of not just hearing the story but experiencing the light of Christ coming into our lives changing us - revealing Christ's light within us. And most of us discovered that light through others who shared the gospel message with us.

Friends, we have been chosen by God to be those who share that light with others. To be the ones who move people from darkness into the light that can totally change their lives. And what that takes is a conversation. A sharing of our faith leading others into the light that Christ provides. And that my friends, is what we were chosen by God to do. And we can do that anywhere - even from our homes in the midst of a pandemic thanks to telephones and the Internet.

May we seek out new ways to share our faith with others. To lead others into the light of Christ so their lives too might shine. Friends, we have been chosen by God for such a time as this. May we use it wisely.